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President Reagan

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Following is an address by President Reagan before the British Parliament, London, June 8, 1982, during his trip to France, the Vatican, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the Federal Republic of Germany, June 2-11, 1982.

The journey of which this visit forms a part is a long one. Already it has taken me to two great cities of the West—Rome and Paris—and to the economic summit at Versailles. There, once again, our sister democracies have proved that, even in a time of severe economic strain, free peoples can work together freely and voluntarily to address problems as serious as inflation, unemployment, trade, and economic development in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity. Other milestones lie ahead. Later this week in Germany, we and our NATO allies will discuss measures for our joint defense and America's latest initiatives for a more peaceful, secure world through arms reductions.

Each stop of this trip is important, but, among them all, this moment occupies a special place in my heart and the hearts of my countrymen—a moment of kinship and homecoming in these hallowed halls. Speaking for all Americans, I want to say how very much at home we feel in your house. Every American would, because this is—as we have been so eloquently told—one of democracy's shrines. Here the rights of free people and the processes of representation have been debated and refined.

It has been said that an institution is the lengthening shadow of a man. This institution is the lengthening shadow of all the men and women who have sat here and all those who have voted to send representatives here.

This is my second visit to Great Britain as President of the United States. My first opportunity to stand on British soil occurred almost a year and a half ago when your Prime Minister graciously hosted a diplomatic dinner at the British Embassy in Washington. Mrs. Thatcher said then that she hoped that I was not distressed to find staring down at me from the grand staircase a portrait of His Royal Majesty King George III. She suggested it was best to let bygones be bygones and—in view of our two countries' remarkable friendship in succeeding years—she added that most Englishmen today would agree with Thomas Jefferson that “a little rebellion now and then is a very good thing.”

From here I will go on to Bonn and then Berlin, where there stands a grim symbol of power untamed. The Berlin Wall, that dreadful gray gash across the city, is in its third decade. It is the fitting signature of the regime that built it. And a few hundred kilometers behind the Berlin Wall there is another symbol. In the center of Warsaw there is a sign that notes the distances to two capitals. In one direction it points toward Moscow. In the other it points toward Brussels, headquarters of Western Europe's tangible unity. The marker says that the distances from Warsaw to Moscow and Warsaw to Brussels are